

What's Going on in Dunstable?

THE DUNSTABLE SELECT BOARD'S QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

APRIL 14, 2023

Annual Town Meeting: Monday, May 8

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Dunstable's Annual Town Meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday, May 8 at 7 PM at the Swallow Union School. Currently, the Town Meeting Warrant is comprised of 20 articles.

FY24 Operational Budget

This year at Town Meeting, the Select Board and Advisory Board will present a budget requiring an operational Proposition 2 1/2 Override in the amount of \$301,162 to maintain current level of services. This request, if approved at Town Meeting, will then need to be approved by popular vote at the Town Election the following week on Tuesday, May 16, 2023. The override will avoid reductions to the Police, Fire, Highway, and several other municipal departments.

Proposition 2 1/2 Overview

Proposition 2 1/2 places limits on the amount of property tax revenue a

community can raise through real and personal property taxes. This revenue is called the Tax Levy. Proposition 2 1/2 limits how much the levy can be increased from year-to-year. The maximum amount a community can levy in any given year is called the Levy Limit.



Under Proposition 2 1/2, a community's levy limit increases by two factors: 1) an increase of 2.5% of the prior year's levy limit; and 2) a dollar amount derived from the value of new construction and other growth in the local tax base since the previous year. This second factor is called New Growth. The 2 1/2% increase and new growth number are both added to the prior year's levy limit to reach the current year's levy limit.

A community cannot exceed its levy limit without voter approval. If Town Meeting votes to spend more than the Town can expect to collect in revenues, Proposition 2 1/2 provides local options for increasing the Levy Limit by passing, by majority vote in an election, an override, capital outlay exclusion, or debt exclusion. The Levy Limit can be increased only by popular vote in a referendum, not by Town Meeting.

By passing an Override a community can assess a specific amount of property taxes in addition to its Levy Limit. An override results in a permanent increase in the Levy Limit. It is intended for funding ongoing programs.

Other Town Meeting Warrant Articles

There are a total of 20 articles on the Town Meeting Warrant. In addition to the budget article, there are articles related to the following:

- Community Preservation Committee project recommendations
- The creation of a stabilization fund for opioid settlement funds
- A Right-of-Way General Bylaw
- Other standard articles which appear on the warrant annually

More on the FY24 Budget

The Select and Advisory Boards are requesting an override in the amount of \$301,162 to support the municipal functions of the town. This override will be used to fund police, fire, highway, and several

other areas of town that ensure smooth operations for our residents.

For more information on the budget and Town Meeting, please visit the Town’s website at www.dunstable-ma.gov.

Below you will find the estimated impacts of the override request on the average property tax bill and additional information on the budget reductions that will be needed if the override request is unsuccessful.

	No Override	Override
Override Amount*		\$301,162.00
Tax Rate	\$15.12	\$15.52
Average Tax Bill	\$8,951.04	\$9,187.84
Increase		\$236.80

Cost to Taxpayer			
	Per Year	Per Month	Per Day
1 Year Override	\$236.80	\$19.73	\$0.65

If the override request fails, budget reductions to public safety, highway, and other areas of municipal government will occur. These include eliminating

one patrol officer in the Police Department, reducing staff coverage in the Fire Department from 2 per diem to 1 per diem firefighter during days, and

eliminating a requested position in the Highway Department, along with other reductions. The budget cuts are outlined below.

Department	Budget Reductions
Police	\$84,874.04
Fire	\$52,824.00
Highway	\$73,464.00
Treasurer/Collector	\$5,000.00
Selectmen	\$5,000.00
Parks	\$5,000.00

Questions? Email selectmen@dunstable-ma.gov

Union Building Rehab Committee Takes Shape

The Union Building is owned by the Town of Dunstable and currently occupied by the Groton-Dunstable School District. Once the School District completes the construction of the new Florence Roche Elementary School, the District intends to vacate the building and turn it over to the Town.

The Select Board has created a Union Building Rehabilitation Committee responsible for making recommendations on the rehabilitation and restoration of the Union Building, including establishing a long-term plan for restoration, rehabilitation, estimating costs and devel-

oping an approach for the restoration, and creating a plan to advance the restoration and rehabilitation of the building taking into consideration both the future use of the building and availability of funding.

The Committee is comprised of a total of seven members: one member of the Board of Selectmen, one representative from the GDRSD, one individual who has experience in residential or commercial development, one member with a background in banking and/or finance, and three members of the community-at-large. The Select Board has recently made appoint-

ments to the Committee and has scheduled its first meeting.

As part of this project, there is expected to be extensive public participation process including public meetings, site visit, survey, and other engagement strategies with interested stakeholders not represented on the Committee such as the Historical Commission. The Select Board invites you to participate!



Grant and State Funding Updates

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant

The Town was recently notified that it secured a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program grant in the amount of \$37,000 to complete a community resiliency and hazard mitigation planning process and expanded scope that will examine the community's vulnerabilities and strengths and identify priority actions to build resilience as the climate changes.

Cybersecurity Awareness Grant

The Town was recently awarded a grant through the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security's Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program to participate in their training program from

September to December. The program supports local government efforts to improve overall cybersecurity posture through comprehensive online end-user training, evaluation, and threat simulation.

Earmark for Bandstand Repairs

In the state's Economic Development bill, \$75,000 was earmarked for repairs of the bandstand on the Common. We anticipate improvements to include some combination of repairs to the roof, floor, frame, and other exterior improvements, as needed. The first phase of the project will be repairing and upgrading the electrical connection to the bandstand which is slated to be completed mid-May.

Earmark for Public Safety Improvements

The Town has been awarded \$50,000 for public safety improvements through the state's ARPA bill and we are now working with state officials to access these funds and put them to good use!

NMCOG Technical Assistance Grant

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) has awarded the Town with Technical Assistance Grants to help identify and prepare funding applications for locating Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in Town and also to conduct a solar assessment on publicly-owned properties.

Liquor Licenses on Tap in Dunstable

The Town has been working with the state's Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission to develop the local materials necessary to begin processing applications for liquor licenses in Dunstable.

The state legislature just recently approved the local home rule petition to allow

the Town to issue liquor licenses.

The Select Board will serve as the Local Licensing Authority, the body that will issue liquor licenses in Dunstable, and will also set the fee schedule, hours of operation under the license, and other considerations under

the law such as setting restrictions on the selling of nips and single-serve beers. Under state law, the Town has access to 14 All Alcohol On Premise licenses, 2 All Alcohol Off Premise licenses, 5 Wine and Malt On Premise licenses, and 5 Wine and Malt Off Premise licenses.

PFAS at the High School

Town officials have been conducting regular meetings with the Towns of Pepperell, Groton, and the School District. Most recently, there have been two options being discussed and considered to solve the problem of PFAS in the drinking water at the high school – one option is to bring water from Groton and the second option where water is brought from Pepperell via a connection between Pepperell and Dunstable. In short, the Groton solution is at a cost of approximately \$16.8 million, the Pepperell/Dunstable solution is approximately \$17.5 million. However, with Pepperell contributing to the cost, the total expense to the Towns of Dunstable and Groton is anticipated to be slightly over \$7 million. In sum, for the Dunstable/Pepperell solution, Pepperell

helped break the project into 3 phases:

Groton Street to Kemp Street - \$10,078,737.88

Service for Groton Street and Kemp Street related to PFAS release mitigation - \$3,031,012.86

North Street/Inter Flavell Road/GDRHS Connection - \$4,019,556.02

Total - \$17,629,306.76

This work would include construction of a 12-inch water main connection from Route 113 in Dunstable down Groton Street and North Street to Jersey Street in Pepperell. Connections will also be made to the GDRSD High School and the Kemp Street/Groton Street PFAS-impacted properties.

The Groton project would bring a water main down

Chicopee Row and loop around the school to the PFAS impacted properties.

Before the PFAS issue was known, the Towns of Pepperell and Dunstable were in discussions related to working together on water infrastructure/management and potentially creating a water district between the two communities. These discussions began because of the levels of PFAS in Pepperell water and Dunstable's desire to continue our relationship with Pepperell for water systems management/operations. The cost to make the connection along Route 113 from Dunstable to Pepperell which was originally being considered was estimated at \$10,424,231.51. Thus, this is the basis for the contribution from the Town of Pepperell.

Lowell Street Repaving

The Highway Department is planning to have Lowell Street repaved this year starting mid-May. At present, the schedule is for milling activities to begin on May 16 and 17, and paving to take place on May 22. Please remember this schedule is subject to change based on weather and other factors out of our control.

Volunteer for the Town!

There are many openings on Town Boards and Committees. Visit the Town's website at www.dunstable-ma.gov to check out the vacancies. If interested, please send an email to selectmen@dunstable-ma.gov! We hope you'll apply to serve!

Route 113 Project Resumes

Work on the Route 113 project has resumed. The water line replacement is completed from Hillcrest Street to McGovern's wall. Currently, the project is ahead of schedule but please continue to be patient with traffic delays, road detours, and reduced access to the town. Construction workers and police officers are working to guide traffic. It is expected the work will be completed in August-September of 2023.

Town's Bond Rating Increases!

Moody's upgraded the Town of Dunstable's bond rating to Aa3 from A1. This is obviously great news and speaks to Dunstable's strong resident incomes and wealth, strong housing market, and low leverage and fixed costs.

Townwide Roadside Cleanup

This year the Dunstable Grange will be sponsoring a Town Wide roadside cleanup from **April 15th through April 25th**. The Grange will supply bags and gloves, which are available at the **Tully Farm Store**, 446 Pleasant St., and at the **Dunstable Town Hall**, upstairs.

The Grange would like to encourage everyone to pick up around the road near their homes. Our amazing Highway crew will pick up the bags, so you can leave them on the side of the road. If everyone pitches in, the town will be in great shape!

What a great way to celebrate Earth Day! We appreciate your continued support in keeping Dunstable beautiful!

MUD Property Affordable Housing Project

The Select Board has selected MCO and Associates to develop affordable housing at the MUD property behind the Post Office. Information on the proposed project can be found [here](#). The Town is now negotiating a Land Development Agreement with the developer. The next step will then be to submit a joint Local Initiative Project (LIP) application with the developer to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

350th Anniversary

350th Anniversary Committee continues to organize fun events and share stories of the town's history in honor of our Anniversary. Come take a hike through History on Sunday, April 23rd. Our Scavenger Hunt kicks off on May 27th and finishes up with a check in at the DRLT Art Show at McLoon Barn on June 24th, also the day of the Strawberry Festival. Please check us out on [Facebook](#), [Neighbor to Neighbor](#), [Nextdoor](#), and our calendar on [the Town Website](#) for more upcoming events this year!

